



International Symposium

REvision2018: Towards Massive Deployment of Low Cost, Renewable Electricity

Congratulatory Remarks by H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister of Foreign Affairs

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(Original [in Japanese](#). Provisional Translation by Renewable Energy Institute)

First, let me commend the Renewable Energy Institute for its efforts as the organizer of this international symposium REvision2018.

Since assuming my post as Minister for Foreign Affairs, the situation with North Korea has been the single biggest foreign policy challenge facing Japan. However, aside from that, climate change has also become an urgent issue for foreign policy. How do we deal with climate change? This is more than a purely environmental question. In fact, the challenge has implications for development issues and even the full spectrum of economic endeavor as a whole. What sort of foreign policy strategy might we pursue with a focus on the dimension of climate change? That is a huge question that will test the foreign policy acumen of every single nation.

I need not point out here that the Renewable Energy Institute has established itself as one of Japan's leading think tanks for researching global trends in renewable energy resources, understanding various energy-related issues, and developing policy recommendations for the national government. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government institutions have been exchanging views and ideas with the Renewable Energy Institute on a regular basis. As a member on the Advisory Panel of Experts on Climate Change, which we at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established in January this year, the Renewable Energy Institute has taken part in a variety of discussions that reflect attention to the latest global trends as well as a broad array of data.

Climate change is without question one of the most pressing issues now confronting humankind. Achieving the 2°C global temperature target proposed under the Paris Agreement will demand a serious, coordinated effort by the entire international community. Climate change has clearly aggravated the severity of the natural calamities that affect all regions of our planet, making it a threat that we need to address as quickly as possible. Prior to assuming my current post as Foreign Minister, I served as Minister of State for Disaster Management. That is when I learned that the island nations in the Pacific and Caribbean islands have been working in earnest to address this issue. In Greenland, meanwhile, vast sheets of glaciers—now exhibiting massive melt ponds—have been melting at a rate far faster than the average pace in normal years. Go anywhere in the world today, and you will hear about how the climate is clearly undergoing transformations.

As humankind moves to address climate change, the expanding global drive to harness renewable energy technologies has emerged as an extremely positive force. Renewable energy has been growing strongly both in terms of investment scale and price competitiveness, and those are among the key reasons that many areas of the world have been advancing largely to adopt it. Some years ago, Japan was a world leader in the utilization of solar energy for heat and power generation. However, as I noted at the recent session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in Abu Dhabi, the situation in our solar energy sector today can only be described as lamentable.

It is my position that Japan must develop policies on climate change that are backed by the adoption of renewable energy resources. As we harness those policies to foster economic growth at home, we must also find solutions to the societal and economic challenges facing the world at large. Furthermore, I believe that Japan must pursue a proactive foreign policy on climate change—assuming policy leadership in that undertaking, if possible—and do its utmost to bring the visions of the Paris Agreement to fruition.

In December last year, I attended the One Planet Summit on climate change that French President Emmanuel Macron convened in Paris. One surprise for me was the fact that this conference already had an English title even though it was being hosted by the French President. Although the US government had announced its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, representatives from many US states, municipalities, and private companies did participate in the summit. While the federal government in the US has taken various positions on the Paris Agreement, local governments and private companies in the US are actually trying to do something about climate change, and that is not a trend I believe to be limited to the US. It is imperative that not merely national governments, but citizens at all levels—from local government and the corporate sector to civil society and private households—align forces along the same vector and work together to bring climate change to a halt.

I am hopeful that today's symposium will be an opportunity for energetic discussions and debate that lead us to a clearer vision of what we have to do to defeat climate change. Furthermore, I pledge on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that we will actively engage in dealing with the issues at hand. In closing, let me once again commend the Renewable Energy Institute for its work in hosting this symposium today. Thank you.